

## Claims

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- [c1] 1. A method for pre-screening customer data by a selling entity for credit pre-approval determination of a customer at a point of sale location, comprising: receiving said customer data at a point of sale system; and during a check out process: transmitting said customer data to a server; searching a database for said customer data; and based upon results of said searching: performing a credit worthiness check; and providing said customer with an invitation to open a charge account; wherein if said customer accepts: opening said charge account; and if desired by said customer, executing a charge purchase during said check out process at said point of sale system.
- [c2] 2. The method of claim 1, further comprising: holding said invitation open for a predetermined period of time; and providing said customer with information on how to access said invitation at a future date.
- [c3] 3. The method of claim 1, wherein said customer data includes at least one of said customer's: name; address; telephone number; social security number; photo identification card; and membership card relating to said selling entity.
- [c4] 4. The method of claim 1, wherein said searching a database for said customer data includes determining whether a membership status of said customer is active or inactive; wherein further said credit worthiness check is performed on customer data with an active status.
- [c5] 5. The method of claim 1, wherein said searching a database for said customer

data includes determining whether said customer has a current charge account with said selling entity.

- [c6] 6. The method of claim 1 wherein said credit worthiness check is performed by a credit bureau.
- [c7] 7. The method of claim 1, wherein said credit worthiness check is performed by a credit issuer.
- [c8] 8. The method of claim 1 wherein said credit worthiness check is a full bureau check.
- [c9] 9. The method of claim 1 wherein said credit worthiness check is a partial bureau check.
- [c10] 10. The method of claim 1 wherein said performing a credit worthiness check includes determining at least one of:  
a credit account limit;  
an annual percentage rate; and  
an account type;  
for customers who have met specified criteria for said credit pre-approval determination.
- [c11] 11. The method of claim 1, wherein said providing said customer with an invitation to open a charge account includes printing out said invitation and providing terms and conditions.
- [c12] 12. The method of claim 1, wherein said providing said customer with an invitation to open a charge account includes:  
offering said customer an incentive to accept said invention through at least one of:  
a discount off of a purchase; and  
a reduced interest rate.
- [c13] 13. The method of claim 2, wherein said providing said customer information on how to access said invitation at a future date includes printing said information on a receipt at said point of sale system.

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[c14] 14. The method of claim 1, wherein data related to pre-approvals and declinations of invitations to open a charge account are transmitted to said server and customer records relating to said data are updated.

[c15] 15. The method of claim 1, wherein said opening said charge account includes providing said customer with a charge card.

[c16] 16. The method of claim 1, wherein said opening said charge account includes performing a fraud check, said fraud check including verifying said customer's identity.

[c17] 17. A storage medium encoded with machine-readable computer program code for pre-screening customer data by a selling entity for credit pre-approval determination of a customer at a point of sale location, the storage medium including instructions for causing the selling entity to implement a method comprising:  
receiving said customer data at a point of sale system; and  
during a check out process:  
transmitting said customer data to a server;  
searching a database for said customer data; and  
based upon results of said searching:  
performing a credit worthiness check; and  
providing said customer with an invitation to open a charge account; wherein if said customer accepts:  
opening said charge account; and  
if desired by said customer, executing a charge purchase during said check out process at said point of sale system.

[c18] 18. The storage medium of claim 17, further comprising:  
holding said invitation open for a predetermined period of time; and  
providing said customer with information on how to access said invitation at a future date.

[c19] 19. The storage medium of claim 17, wherein said customer data includes at least one of said customer's:  
name;

address;  
telephone number;  
social security number;  
photo identification card; and  
membership card relating to said selling entity.

[c20] 20. The storage medium of claim 17, wherein said searching a database for said customer data includes determining whether a membership status of said customer is active or inactive; wherein further said credit worthiness check is performed on customer data with an active status.

[c21] 21. The storage medium of claim 17, wherein said searching a database for said customer data includes determining whether said customer has a current charge account with said selling entity.

[c22] 22. The storage medium of claim 17 wherein said credit worthiness check is performed by a credit bureau.

[c23] 23. The storage medium of claim 17, wherein said credit worthiness check is performed by a credit issuer.

[c24] 24. The storage medium of claim 17 wherein said credit worthiness check is a full bureau check.

[c25] 25. The storage medium of claim 17 wherein said credit worthiness check is a partial bureau check.

[c26] 26. The storage medium of claim 17 wherein said performing a credit worthiness check includes determining at least one of:  
a credit account limit;  
an annual percentage rate; and  
an account type;  
for customers who have met specified criteria for said credit pre-approval determination.

[c27] 27. The storage medium of claim 17, wherein said providing said customer with an invitation to open a charge account includes printing out said invitation and providing terms and conditions.

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- [c28] 28. The storage medium of claim 17, wherein said providing said customer with an invitation to open a charge account includes:  
offering said customer an incentive to accept said invention through at least one of:  
a discount off of a purchase; and  
a reduced interest rate.
- [c29] 29. The storage medium of claim 18, wherein said providing said customer information on how to access said invitation at a future date includes printing said information on a receipt at said point of sale system.
- [c30] 30. The storage medium of claim 17, wherein data related to pre-approvals and declinations of invitations to open a charge account are transmitted to said server and customer records relating to said data are updated.
- [c31] 31. The storage medium of claim 17, wherein said opening said charge account includes providing said customer with a charge card.
- [c32] 32. The storage medium of claim 17, wherein said opening said charge account includes performing a fraud check, said fraud check including verifying said customer's identity.
- [c33] 33. A system for pre-screening customer data by a selling entity for credit pre-approval determination of a customer at a point of sale location, comprising:  
a selling entity including:  
at least one point of sale system coupled to a communications link;  
a server coupled to said at least one point of sale system via said communications link;  
a data storage device in communication with said server; and  
a link to a credit information server;  
wherein said customer data is processed and said credit pre-approval determination is made prior to said customer selecting a payment method.
- [c34] 34. The system of claim 33, wherein said point of sale system:  
receives said customer data;  
transmits said customer data to said server;  
processes check out activities;

receives credit pre-approval determination information from said server;  
prints out data related to said credit pre-approval determination information; and  
if desired by a pre-approved customer, an account number is generated and a  
charge purchase is executed for merchandise selected by said customer.

- [c35] 35. The system of claim 33, wherein said server:  
accesses customer records relating to said pre-approval determination; and  
if customer data stored in said customer records meets specified criteria, transmits  
said customer to said credit information server for a credit worthiness check.
- [c36] 36. The system of claim 33, wherein said link to a credit information server  
includes a dedicated telephone line.
- [c37] 37. The system of claim 33, wherein said link to a credit information server  
includes an Internet connection.

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